

► In The News

Kind gifts mark HCC Giving Tree's 20th year

Holyoke Community College celebrated the 20th anniversary of its annual Giving Tree campaign last week, fulfilling the holiday wishes of 375 consumers from four nonprofits that aid and support some of the area's most at-risk residents.

During the campaign's closing ceremony on Dec. 12, HCC students, faculty and staff gathered with representatives from WestMass Elder Care, Homework House, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the Holyoke Soldiers' Home to share food, stories and gifts.

"Every year, when HCC asks us if we want to be a part of this, there is no way we could say no," said Brittani Bey, a home visitor from the MSPCC. "All of our families are more than grateful to have something for their child, otherwise they might not be able to give them anything at all."

Eleven HCC departments participated in this year's Fall Food Fest in November, raising \$833 for the Giving Tree campaign. The money was used to fulfill 26 gift tags for MSPCC and create gift boxes that included baby wipes, diapers, clothing, books and toys.

"We have several families who are in shelters right now and questioning where they might sleep tomorrow," Bey said. "To be able to give them gifts and provide them with something really brightens their day, and we appreciate all of



Student Sierra Palazzi helps distribute gifts during the closing celebration for Holyoke Community College's 20th annual Giving Tree campaign.

your help."

Each year during the annual campaign, Giving Trees are set up in designated areas around the HCC campus. Participants choose colored-coded tags from one of the nonprofit agencies based on the age of the recipient and their wish for a gift. The wrapped gifts are then sorted and piled on tables for the closing celebration.

"From the moment the Giving Trees

go up, there is some magic and excitement that is generated on campus," said Kathryn Senie, chief of staff to college President Christina Royal. "You see them in the hallways and people taking tags, which is wonderful. It's really about kindness, isn't it? And kindness is one of our values at HCC, and when I look at the missions of our community partners, I dare say it's one of your values too."

Senie pointed out that this year the



Holyoke Community College student Robert Vigneault, a member of the 2019 Giving Tree Committee, pushes a cart full of gifts.

Submitted photos

staff at WestMass Elder Care made a reciprocal gesture of generosity to the college, collecting and donating 226 pounds of food and supplies to the HCC Food Pantry.

"This is kindness," she said, "and together we have a collective impact on the communities and the people that we serve, so thank you."